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Enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report provides an overview of intersessional activities undertaken since the eleventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests in areas related to enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues. In particular, it highlights activities undertaken within the United Nations by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional partners, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as well as communications and outreach activities. It also highlights the enhanced roles of relevant partners and stakeholders, as highlighted in Economic and Social Council resolution 2015/33, the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 and the quadrennial programme of work of the Forum for the period 2017-2020. Finally, the report provides proposed revised guidelines for country-led initiatives and similar initiatives organized in support of the Forum, aimed at enhancing their contributions to its work.

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I. Introduction

1. The Economic and Social Council, by adopting its resolution 2015/33, set the stage for enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement among stakeholders and partners of the international arrangement on forests with respect to forest-related issues, including member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, regional and subregional organizations and processes, major groups and other stakeholders. Most recently, Member States highlighted the significant role of those stakeholders and partners in the implementation of the United Nations strategic plan for forests 2017-2030 (E/2017/10, annex) and the achievement of its global forest goals and targets. To ensure such enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement, they also agreed to include a standing item on the matter in the agendas for the odd-year sessions of the Forum covered by its quadrennial programme of work for the period 2017-2020.

2. The present report on enhanced cooperation, coordination and engagement on forest-related issues has been prepared to support discussions on that agenda item during the twelfth session of the Forum. It provides an overview of intersessional activities undertaken within the United Nations since the eleventh session by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and its member organizations, regional and subregional partners, major groups and other relevant stakeholders, as well as communications and outreach activities. Those activities were important contributions to the implementation of resolution 2015/33 and provided valuable input to the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work.

3. Pursuant to paragraph 6 (e) of resolution 2015/33, the report also includes proposed revised guidelines for country-led initiatives and similar initiatives in support of the implementation of the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work, for the consideration and decision of the Forum at its twelfth session.

II. Information on intersessional activities

A. Supporting the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly

4. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1, provides a broad and universal policy agenda and contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals with 169 related targets to guide decisions and actions to be taken by countries over a 15-year period in support of sustainable development.

5. The high-level political forum on sustainable development was established by the General Assembly to provide systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global level. At each of its meetings, the forum discusses its annual theme, a set of Sustainable Development Goals and their interlinkages with other Goals with a view to facilitating an in-depth review of progress made on the implementation of all Goals over the course of a four-year cycle, with means of implementation, including with respect to Goal 17, reviewed annually.

6. The United Nations Forum on Forests, as a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council, contributes to and supports follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, particularly the thematic reviews of progress made on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, including cross-cutting issues, under the high-level political forum. The contributions of the Forum are to be considered in the context of the implementation of the strategic plan. Further information about the implementation of the plan is provided in the note by the Secretariat on that subject (E/CN.18/2017/2).

7. For the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum, held under the theme "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum after 2015", the Forum submitted the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of its eleventh session, entitled "The forests we want: beyond 2015" (see Economic and Social Council decision 2015/254), as its contribution to the 2030 Agenda, stressing the significant role of forests in the implementation of the sustainable development programme beyond 2015.

8. The Bureau of the Forum at its twelfth session submitted its input to the high-level political forum at its 2016 meeting, held in July under the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind", highlighting the wide range of the contributions of forests to the 2030 Agenda as well as their key contributions, challenges and opportunities in the context of that theme.

B. Department of Economic and Social Affairs

9. As part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests continued to actively participate in intradepartmental activities by playing an active role in the Department's working groups and task forces, including its 2016 strategy for capacity development. The secretariat continued to provide annual forest-related inputs to the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on the work of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council, as well as information and policy recommendations relevant to the themes being considered by the Council.

10. The secretariat of the Forum also contributed substantively to the 2015 and 2016 meetings of the high-level political forum by providing relevant information for inclusion in the official documents for the meetings. Those contributions included: (a) the provision of inputs on follow-up and review processes and platforms to the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda; (b) the provision of inputs to a report of the Secretary-General on critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level; (c) the provision of inputs to the *Global Sustainable Development Reports*; and (d) participation as an observer in the meetings of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators.

11. Furthermore, the secretariat of the Forum contributed to the process of financing for development and the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In July 2016, it organized a side event on forest finance at the Conference to provide information about sustainable forest management and to strengthen the inclusion of forests in the outcomes of the Conference. Also in 2016, the secretariat provided

input to the Inter-Agency Task Force on Financing for Development, whose objective is to monitor and report on the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda by drafting an issue brief on forest finance as part of a thematic series of briefs in support of the work of the Task Force.

12. As part of a joint coordination effort of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the secretariat of the Forum participates in the Environment Management Group, a United Nations system-wide coordination body on the environment and human settlements chaired by the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and serviced by UNEP. The Group carries out its work through technical meetings, meetings of senior officials, issue management groups, consultative processes and task teams.

13. The secretariat of the Forum has provided a series of inputs to the work of the Environment Management Group, including the preparation of the System-Wide Framework of Strategies on the Environment and the work of its task team to maximize the Group's effectiveness in the context of the 2030 Agenda. The secretariat has also contributed to other initiatives of the Group, including the work on environmental management carried out in the United Nations system by the Issue Management Group on Environmental Sustainability Management to help implement the United Nations climate-neutral strategy.

14. The Forum secretariat represents the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the inter-agency task force established to provide an effective and coherent United Nations response to illicit trafficking in wildlife and forest products. The work of the task force is aimed at:

(a) Supporting and strengthening the implementation of the recommendations for the United Nations system response to illicit trafficking in wildlife and forest products;

(b) Supporting a coherent response by the United Nations system to reporting requirements mandated and requested in, inter alia, resolutions and declarations;

(c) Enhancing collaboration and coherence in the United Nations system response and preventing duplication of efforts;

(d) Identifying opportunities to initiate and strengthen inter-agency efforts to implement the recommendations for the United Nations system response at the global, regional, national and site levels;

(e) Harmonizing and enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of relevant resource mobilization efforts, including by increasing the opportunities to provide financial support across the United Nations system;

(f) Providing a platform for the exchange of information and efficient engagement with the wider United Nations system and relevant partners.

15. During the intersessional period, the Forum secretariat participated in the main deliberative bodies of many forest-related international organizations and conventions, promoting the work of the Forum and enhanced cooperation and collaboration. Those meetings included: the fifty-first session of the International Tropical Timber Council, held in Kuala Lumpur in November 2015; the twenty-first

session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Paris in November and December 2015; the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, held in Nairobi in May 2016; the twenty-third session of the Committee on Forestry, held at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in Rome, in July 2016; the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature held in Hawaii, United States of America, in September 2016; and the fifty-second session of the International Tropical Timber Council, held in Yokohama, Japan, in November 2016.

C. Activities of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests in response to invitations from the United Nations Forum on Forests at its eleventh session

1. Strengthening of the Partnership

16. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests was established in April 2001 in response to an invitation from the Economic and Social Council (in its resolution 2000/35), with the objectives of supporting the Forum and its member States and enhancing cooperation and coordination on forest issues.

17. Recognizing the contributions of the Partnership since its inception, the Council provided further guidance to the Partnership in resolution 2015/33 by specifying the core functions of the Partnership, reaffirming the principles of its functioning and encouraging it to consider measures to enhance its support for the Forum and member States of the Forum.

18. In response to the guidance provided by the Council, the Partnership met six times during the intersessional period and considered ways to strengthen itself. Those meetings included a two-day retreat in June 2016 and other meetings held on the margins of major events of its members.

19. Through those activities, the Partnership considered ways to enhance its working modalities, including by formulating a new policy document (a revised version of the original policy document, issued in June 2003), which includes rules of procedure. The Partnership completed the drafting of the document and was expected to approve it before the twelfth session of the Forum. The document provides guidance regarding, inter alia, the mission, functions, membership, delivery mechanisms and governance of the Partnership.

20. In particular, the new policy document sets out the Partnership's mission of helping to enhance the contribution of all types of forests and trees outside forests to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as promoting the sustainable management of all types of forests and strengthening long-term political commitment to that end.

21. The new policy document also reaffirms the core functions of the Partnership as defined by the Council in resolution 2015/33, which are: (a) to support the work of the Forum and its member countries; (b) to provide scientific and technical advice to the Forum, including on emerging issues; (c) to enhance coherence as well as policy and programme cooperation and coordination at all levels among its

member organizations, including through joint programming and the submission of coordinated proposals to their respective governing bodies, consistent with their mandates; and (d) to promote the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument, including the achievement of its global objectives on forests, and the contribution of forests to the post-2015 development agenda. The Partnership will carry out its functions through various delivery mechanisms, including its focal agencies, dialogue and joint initiatives.

22. In addition to working to formalize its working modalities, the Partnership initiated and advanced the development of its workplan, in accordance with resolution 2015/33. The workplan is intended to identify priorities for collective actions by all members or subsets of members and will also include the resource implications of the planned actions. It will be developed on a periodic basis and will be aligned with the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work, taking into account the relevant workplans of members.

23. In implementing the strategic plan, the Partnership and its member organizations have an important role to play in supporting the Forum and its member States in advancing the global forest goals and targets, including through cooperation and partnership among its members, the implementation of its workplan and the identification of collective actions and related resource needs. To that end, it is imperative that member organizations of the Partnership integrate the relevant global forest goals and targets of the strategic plan into their forest-related policies and programmes, as well as that the Partnership workplan ensure synergies and coherence among them.

2. Monitoring, assessment and reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests

24. At its eleventh session, the Forum requested its secretariat, in consultation with Member States, the Partnership and its members and other relevant entities and processes, including criteria and indicators processes, to propose for consideration by the Forum at its twelfth session a cycle and a format for national reporting and the enhancement of voluntary monitoring, assessment and reporting.

25. The Forum secretariat conducted a series of consultations with Member States and international organizations, including an expert group meeting held in Brazil in February 2017, to develop a proposal on a new cycle and format for national reporting. The Partnership provided its input to the expert group, including the outcome of the Partnership's organization-led initiative on global forest indicators convened in November 2016. The proposed cycle and format are included in the report of the Secretary-General on monitoring, assessment and reporting on progress towards implementing the strategic plan, including the United Nations forest instrument and voluntary national contributions (E/CN.18/2017/3).

3. Advocacy and outreach: Wangari Maathai Award for 2015

26. In 2012, the Partnership launched the Wangari Maathai Award to recognize outstanding contributions to the preservation, restoration and sustainable management of forests and to raise awareness of the key role that forests play in supporting local communities, rural livelihoods, women and the environment. The Award honours the memory of Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai, a

champion of forest issues worldwide and the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

27. Following the success of the Wangari Maathai Award ceremonies held in 2012 and 2014, the Partnership presented the 2015 Award to Ugandan forestry activist Gertrude Kabusimbi Kenyangi in recognition of her efforts to promote the conservation and sustainable use of her country's forest resources. The ceremony took place on 10 September 2015 during the fourteenth World Forestry Congress, held in Durban, South Africa.

28. Several members of the Partnership provided voluntary contributions to the Wangari Maathai Award, including for both the $20,000 grant and the travel and other logistical arrangements for the recipient.

4. Organization-led initiative on global forest indicators

29. The Partnership convened an organization-led initiative in support of the Forum on the development of global forest indicators to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the strategic plan.

30. The initiative, held at FAO headquarters in November 2016, was co-sponsored by members of the Partnership, with generous contributions made by the Governments of Germany and Norway. It was attended by 89 experts from 48 countries and 17 international, regional and non-governmental organizations. Nearly all members of the Partnership attended.

31. Keynote and panel discussions were held during the three days of the initiative, with an expert background paper on the development of a global core set of forest indicators serving as the basis for discussion. Participants (a) proposed a common and concise set of global indicators for monitoring progress in achieving the forest-related Sustainable Development Goal targets and implementing other forest-related processes; (b) provided an input to a proposal on a cycle and a format for national reporting; (c) provided an input to and guidance for the process of developing the 2020 Global Forest Resources Assessment of FAO; and (d) recommended that the Partnership establish a joint initiative to expedite work in those areas. A summary of key points, the key message and follow-up points is contained in the summary report of the Co-Chairs of the initiative.[1]

5. Global Forest Expert Panel initiative

32. The Global Forest Expert Panel initiative is led and coordinated by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations to provide a mechanism for linking the information requirements of intergovernmental processes related to forests with existing scientific expertise. Thematic panels produce assessment reports on key issues reflecting expert knowledge of the relevant subjects. The reports, prepared by panels consisting of internationally recognized scientific experts in their fields, are subjected to rigorous peer review.

33. Since its launch, in April 2007, the initiative has completed five assessments, on the following topics: (a) the adaptation of forests to climate change; (b) the international forest regime; (c) biodiversity, forest management and the United

[1] See http://www.cpfweb.org/45490-0d71a5912f12057f07cada2389889b88.pdf.

Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the Role of Conservation, Sustainable Management of Forests and Enhancement of Forest Carbon Stocks in Developing Countries (REDD-plus); (d) forests and food security; and (e) illegal logging and related timber trade. The assessment report on forests and food security was launched during the eleventh session of the Forum, held in May 2015. The topic of illegal logging and related timber trade was taken up as a rapid response assessment in December 2015. The report *Illegal Logging and Related Timber Trade — Dimensions, Drivers, Impacts and Responses* and the related policy brief entitled "Forests beyond the law: scientific insights into illegal logging and related timber trade" were successfully launched at the high-level segment of the thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2016.

34. The latest Global Forest Expert Panel assessment, on the topic "Forests and water", was initiated in January 2017 and is designed to feed into the 2030 Agenda by connecting Sustainable Development Goal 6, on water, and Goal 15, on forests, thereby illustrating the cross-sectoral contributions of forests to multiple Goals. The study is aimed at providing input to the 2018 meeting of the high-level political forum in order to contribute to the in-depth review of the progress made in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 6 and 15. Accordingly, the assessment will also be of particular relevance at the thirteenth session of the Forum, to be held in 2018.

6. Retreat of the Partnership in 2016

35. The Partnership held its 2016 retreat from 16 to 17 June in Rome. The main objectives of the retreat were to hold a strategic discussion on the future priorities, focus and direction of the Partnership and to reflect on how members of the Partnership should interact to achieve the best possible outcomes.

36. The main issues discussed included: (a) how Partnership members were responding to the new developments and opportunities for synergies regarding the outcomes of the eleventh session of the Forum, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Durban Declaration of the fourteenth World Forestry Congress; (b) the role of the Partnership in supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the strategic plan; (c) enhancing coherence and coordination; (d) strengthening the Partnership; (e) the workplan of the Partnership; (f) contribution to the strategic plan; and (g) funding for activities of the Partnership.

37. In particular, members discussed possible ways to strengthen the Partnership by formalizing working modalities and developing procedures for its effective functioning and operation. Areas of discussion included: (a) revision of the policy document, including rules of procedure; (b) a long-term approach to membership and current requests to join the Partnership; (c) the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders; and (d) areas for the further development and expansion of joint initiatives.

D. Regional and subregional organizations and processes

38. At its eleventh session, the Forum recognized the important role that regional and subregional entities play in the international arrangement on forests. In paragraph 1 (c) of resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council noted that the arrangement involved as partners interested regional and subregional organizations, while in paragraph 2 it emphasized that the objectives of the arrangement beyond 2015 should be achieved through the actions, individually and collectively, of Member States, international, regional and subregional organizations and processes, major groups and other stakeholders.

39. In accordance with resolution 2015/33, sessions of the Forum held after 2015 should be restructured to foster greater exchange of experiences and lessons learned among countries, regional, subregional and non-governmental partners and the Partnership. Odd-year sessions will serve as an opportunity for regional and subregional entities, along with other stakeholders, to provide technical advice and input to the Forum.

40. In resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council requested the Forum to strengthen its collaboration with relevant regional and subregional entities in order to facilitate the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument, as well as to facilitate their inputs to sessions of the Forum. It also requested the secretariat of the Forum to consult with relevant regional and subregional partners on means to enhance collaboration between them and the Forum. In addition, it invited regional and subregional entities to consider developing or strengthening programmes on sustainable forest management, as well as to provide coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum. Finally, it invited Member States to consider, on a voluntary basis and as appropriate, establishing or strengthening regional and subregional processes or platforms for forest policy development, dialogue and coordination to promote sustainable forest management while seeking to avoid fragmentation.

41. The role of regional and subregional organizations and processes was also emphasized in the strategic plan, which states that such entities provide a crucial bridge between international policies and national actions and are important partners in efforts to implement the strategic plan and achieve its global forest goals and targets. In addition, Member States are invited in the strategic plan to consider strengthening regional and subregional forest policy development, dialogue and coordination to advance the strategic plan.

42. In response to resolution 2015/33 and to further engage regional and subregional partners in the process for the development of the strategic plan, the secretariat of the Forum and the secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization jointly organized and convened an expert meeting to explore means and ways to enhance the involvement of regional and subregional entities in the international arrangement on forests.[2] The meeting was held from 26 to 28 September 2016 at the headquarters of the Economic Cooperation Organization, in Tehran, with the participation of 10 regional and subregional entities in addition

[2] See http://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Tehran_final-report-1.pdf.

to the organizers.[3] Discussions were focused on the outcome of the eleventh session of the Forum, as well as the relevant elements of the 2030 Agenda. Participants agreed upon the following set of proposed actions to enhance regional and subregional involvement in the work of the arrangement:

(a) Sustainable Development Goal forest-related targets and actions that have been adopted by regional and subregional organizations and processes should be reflected in the strategic plan to the extent possible and as appropriate. The Forum will facilitate the submission of such targets and actions;

(b) Greater visibility of the role of regional and subregional organizations and processes in galvanizing the implementation of sustainable forest management on the ground and in serving as a bridge between global policy discussions and national and local-level actions should be reflected in the strategic plan;

(c) Mechanisms should be developed to foster cooperation between the Forum and regional and subregional organizations and processes in implementing the strategic plan;

(d) The Forum should assist interested regional and subregional organizations and processes in developing an interregional coordination mechanism to enable consultation and agreement on the submission of coordinated inputs and recommendations to sessions of the Forum in a systematic manner. This mechanism may include arrangements such as regular meetings, online platforms, joint research and virtual meetings;

(e) The Forum and regional and subregional organizations and processes should organize capacity-building activities on the development of actions/strategic plans to translate/facilitate the implementation of the strategic plan at the local, national and regional levels, in particular in regions with low-forest-cover countries and small island developing States;

(f) The Forum and regional and subregional organizations and processes should develop mechanisms for the exchange of information (between the Forum and regional and subregional organizations and processes, between regional organizations and Member States, and among regional organizations) to promote synergies and joint activities in implementing the United Nations forest instrument and the 2030 Agenda;

(g) Forum inputs/reports to the high-level political forum should include coordinated input from regional and subregional organizations and processes. Such input should be seen as an opportunity to communicate the cross-sectoral contributions of forests to all 17 Sustainable Development Goals;

(h) Given the importance of regional and subregional organizations and processes in monitoring, assessment and reporting on the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and the 2030 Agenda and other regional

[3] The African Forest Forum, the African Union Commission, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization, the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, FAO, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, the Centre for People and Forests, the Tehran Process Secretariat for Low Forest Cover Countries, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe.

development agendas, they should be invited to participate in relevant activities/events organized by the Forum and other United Nations bodies;

(i) Given the importance of coordination between the secretariat of the Forum and regional and subregional organizations and processes, the Forum should be invited to participate and collaborate in relevant activities/events organized by those organizations and processes;

(j) The new "restructured" programme of the annual sessions of the Forum should include a regional dialogue/forum/panel to provide greater opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and the sharing of technical advice and best practices on the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and the 2030 Agenda, similar to the arrangements that exist for the Partnership and major groups;

(k) Regional and subregional organizations and processes should observe the International Day of Forests and utilize its communications platform to raise awareness of best practices with regard to sustainable forest management in their regions;

(l) The priorities for the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, to be set out in the strategic plan, shall give due attention to the imperative of the involvement of regional and subregional organizations and processes in the implementation of the United Nations forest instrument and the strategic plan, including the activities mentioned above. Special priority should be given to the financing of capacity-building programmes, the organization of regional workshops and the development of project concepts to assist countries in gaining access to financing from resources, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility and the Adaptation Fund, for promoting sustainable forest management;

(m) The Forum should make use of existing regional and subregional mechanisms to enhance synergies, communicate global policy discussions to relevant stakeholders, collaborate on capacity-building activities and raise awareness of the importance of forests.

43. The outcome of the expert meeting was presented at the second meeting of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, held in Bangkok in October 2016. Some of the suggestions were later incorporated into the proposal of the Co-Chairs on the strategic plan, for consideration by the Forum's working group.

44. Since the eleventh session of the Forum, held in May 2015, regional and subregional organizations and processes have also been engaged in selected activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, as well as the work related to the development of the proposal for a cycle and a format for national reporting to the Forum. Information on those activities is included in the relevant official documents for the twelfth session.

E. Major groups and other relevant stakeholders

45. Since its inception, the Forum has recognized the value of the contributions of major groups and other stakeholders to sustainable forest management and encouraged their active participation in the Forum.

46. In section IX of resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council emphasized the importance of the continued and enhanced participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the sessions of the Forum and its intersessional activities. It invited major groups and other stakeholders to enhance their contributions to the work of the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015 and invited Member States to consider enhancing the participation and contributions of representatives of major groups and other stakeholders in country-led initiatives. In that regard, the Council requested the secretariat of the Forum to promote the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the work of the Forum, in particular leaders from the private and non-governmental sectors, including forest industries, local communities and philanthropic organizations, and to enhance the interaction of the Forum with such stakeholders.

47. In the strategic plan, it is recognized that the effective implementation of sustainable forest management depends on the contributions of all relevant stakeholders, including forest owners, indigenous peoples, local communities, local authorities, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, women, children, youth and scientific, academic and philanthropic organizations. For that reason, the Forum endeavours to work with major groups and other relevant stakeholders to identify ways to enhance their contributions to the achievement of the global forest goals and targets at all levels and their interactions with the Forum and the Partnership, including through networks, advisory groups and other mechanisms to raise awareness, foster the exchange and dissemination of information and facilitate coordinated inputs.

48. Throughout the intersessional period, the secretariat of the Forum held consultations with focal points of major groups in preparation for the twelfth session. Representatives of major groups also contributed significantly to the work of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group, which developed proposals on the strategic plan and the quadrennial programme of work. They presented their views and perspectives in an open manner alongside government experts at both the first and the second meetings of the ad hoc expert group, convened in New York in April 2016 and in Bangkok in October 2016, respectively. The major groups also submitted their written proposals and comments on issues under discussion in the ad hoc expert group.

49. Pursuant to resolution 2015/33 in terms of further enhancing the involvement of major groups and other stakeholders in the work of the Forum, the secretariat of the Forum and the Canadian Forest Service jointly convened a two-day expert meeting, in Ottawa in October 2016, on strengthening the engagement of major groups and other stakeholders in the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015.

50. The expert meeting was aimed at identifying strategies for strengthening the engagement and contributions of major groups and other stakeholders, particularly leaders from the private sector and non-governmental sectors, forest industries, local communities and philanthropic organizations, with respect to the international arrangement on forests beyond 2015; and exploring options for enhancing the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in sessions of the Forum, including the twelfth session, and providing specific inputs to the preparatory work of the open-ended intergovernmental ad hoc expert group on the strategic plan and

the quadrennial programme of work regarding the engagement of those stakeholders in the work of the arrangement. Among other measures, participants agreed that the roles of major groups in the work of the arrangement and the Forum should be enhanced by:

(a) Engaging in the development of the quadrennial programme of work, including by identifying issues for the Forum that are not traditionally recognized;

(b) Co-hosting the stakeholder consultation on issues for consideration during odd-year sessions of the Forum;

(c) Developing and maintaining a roster/database of major group experts by specialty;

(d) Facilitating the creation of networks on cross-cutting issues, such as poverty reduction, timber trade and illegal logging, land and forest tenure and land-use policies, incentive measures, etc.;

(e) Establishing a multi-stakeholder advisory group.[4]

F. Communications and outreach activities, including the International Day of Forests

51. The strategic plan recognizes communications and outreach as essential components of the plan and calls for the development of a communications and outreach strategy to raise awareness, within and outside of the forest sector, of the vital contribution of all types of forests and trees to life on earth and human well-being. The plan also encourages the United Nations system, the Partnership and its member organizations and other partners to enhance cooperation and synergies on forest-related communications and outreach to increase the impact of their messaging, and to consider joint events and products with national, regional, subregional and non-governmental organizations and processes. The plan also notes that the International Day of Forests on 21 March provides a powerful annual event to promote implementation of the strategic plan, and is a platform for individual and collective public outreach activities by all actors on forests at all levels. In addition, the plan encourages Member States to observe the International Day in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders and to inform the Forum about their activities.

52. The secretariat of the Forum works in close collaboration with the Strategic Planning and Communications Service of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which provides outreach, web and social media services for the Department and facilitates the use of information technology and knowledge-sharing. During the intersessional period, the secretariat cooperated closely with the Service on the production of newsletter articles for the Department's electronic publication *Voice* and on social media and multimedia outreach efforts in support of Forum meetings and activities to mark the International Day of Forests. The secretariat also works in close cooperation with the Department of Public Information on communications and outreach efforts to promote awareness of the contributions of forests to the 2030

[4] See http://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Draft-Summary-report-EGM-on-MGoS-engagement-in-IAF-21102016.pdf.

Agenda, including through participation in the interdepartmental United Nations Communications Group Sustainable Development Goals task force.

53. In 2015, the secretariat of the Forum worked with members of the Communicators Group of the Partnership to propose a central theme for the 2015 and 2016 observances of the International Day of Forests. While it was thought that a global theme would help to coordinate communications and messages from the forest community, it was also recognized that countries and organizations would tailor such a theme to their own priority areas. To that end, the Partnership proposed that the 2015 International Day highlight the interlinkages between forests and climate change and that the 2016 Day highlight the interlinkages between forests and water.

54. In 2015, the secretariat of the Forum organized a special event for the International Day, on the theme "Create a climate-smart future", focused on highlighting forest-based solutions to climate change, as well as sustainable development more broadly. The event was chaired by the Director of the secretariat and featured opening remarks by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations. The event included a panel discussion on the theme "Forest-based solutions for climate mitigation and adaptation" with members of the Partnership, including the Permanent Observer of the International Union for Conservation of Nature at the United Nations; the Director of the New York liaison office of FAO; and the Chief of the New York liaison office of the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. During the general discussion, statements were made by the Deputy Permanent Representatives of Israel, Italy and the Russian Federation and the representatives of Brazil, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Japan to the United Nations.

55. The 2016 International Day of Forests was focused on the multifaceted interlinkages between the sustainable management of forest and water resources. The theme provided an opportunity to highlight the types of integrated approaches that will be needed to successfully implement the 2030 Agenda, given the interlinkages between Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 15.

56. The International Day of Forests, 21 March, raises awareness of the importance of all types of forests and trees. World Water Day, 22 March, celebrates water and focuses attention on the importance of freshwater and addressing water-related challenges. The theme "Forests and water" provided an opportunity for the secretariat of the Forum and the secretariat of UN-Water, both of which are part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to work together, along with the Government of Sweden, to organize a special event in joint celebration of the International Day of Forests and World Water Day on 21 March at Headquarters.

57. The special event, entitled "Forests and water: sustain life and livelihoods," featured remarks by senior United Nations and government officials, including the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, the Vice-President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations. It also included a panel discussion, facilitated by the Director of the secretariat of the Forum, with representatives from the secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, the New York City Urban Field Station, the United Nations Global Compact and the World

Wide Fund for Nature. The engaging discussion highlighted how forests and water provide essential resources for the well-being of local communities, as well as their roles in disaster risk reduction and in green infrastructure for economic development.

58. More than 130 participants from the delegations of 52 Member States participated in the special event. It included statements by delegates from Andorra, Canada, Colombia, Georgia, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Tajikistan and FAO. The statements highlighted forest and water stewardship activities as crucial for all spheres of sustainable development. A common theme was the importance of collective action in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goals 6 and 15. Member States also noted the links among forests, water and climate change and, in particular, the importance of forests as carbon sinks.

59. In addition to messages from the Secretary-General and United Nations press releases and news stories, a major component of the communications campaign spearheaded by the secretariat of the Forum relied on the utilization of social media. Through visual content ranging from award-winning films to infographics and ready-to-print forest posters, the campaign cultivated a diverse audience.

60. To amplify the celebration of the International Day, social media campaigns were conducted by the Forum secretariat in partnership with the Department of Public Information, the Strategic Planning and Communications Service and members of the Partnership.

61. In 2015, over the course of the 21-day social media campaign, 26.5 million Twitter accounts were reached, making 87 million impressions. In 2016, from 18 to 23 March, more than 65 million Twitter accounts were reached, with more than 261 million timeline deliveries.

III. Revision of existing guidelines for country-led initiatives and similar initiatives to enhance their contributions to the Forum's work

62. The annex to the resolution entitled "Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication", set out in the report of the Forum on its ninth session (see E/2011/42, chap. I, sect. B), contained guidelines for country-led, organization-led, region-led and major group-led initiatives in support of the Forum, which were agreed upon by the Forum at the same session.[5]

63. In paragraph 6 (e) of resolution 2015/33, the Economic and Social Council requested the Forum to enhance the contributions to the work of the Forum by country-led and similar initiatives by ensuring that they directly support the priorities of the Forum as defined in its four-year work programmes and that their outcomes are considered by the Forum, and update the Forum guidelines in that regard.

[5] See Economic and Social Council decision 2011/250.

64. In response to that paragraph, the proposed updated guidelines below are submitted for the consideration and decision of the Forum at its twelfth session.

IV. Guidelines for country-led, organization-led, region-led and major group-led initiatives in support of the United Nations Forum on Forests

A. Background

65. International expert meetings in support of the work of the Forum hosted by countries or other entities have made important and extremely significant contributions to the intergovernmental forest policy processes. These initiatives are innovative and unique mechanisms of the intergovernmental forest policy process (the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests and the United Nations Forum on Forests) that have deepened knowledge of important issues concerning sustainable forest management and international cooperation in that regard.

66. The usefulness of such initiatives is evident from the recognition that they have received for their contributions to the achievement of consensus and from the increasing number of countries, organizations and major groups that have hosted them in recent years. Their usefulness will be further enhanced in view of the focus provided by the goals, targets and thematic areas contained in the strategic plan. In the light of the experiences gained and lessons learned from initiatives led by countries, organizations, regions and major groups, these proposed guidelines draw upon the previous guidelines contained in resolutions and decisions of the Forum and the Economic and Social Council.

B. Revised guidelines for country-led, organization-led, region-led and major group-led initiatives

67. The overall purpose of any country-led, organization-led, region-led or major group-led initiative is to support the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests. Thus, member States of the Forum may wish to consider the following revised guidelines[6] when planning such initiatives (revisions indicated in bold face):

(a) These initiatives should be **directly related to the priorities of the United Nations Forum on Forests as defined in its quadrennial programme of work**;

(b) These initiatives should be informal in nature, transparent, participatory, strive for balanced representation, including gender, and be open to participation by all member States of the Forum, members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, representatives of major groups, as well as other interested stakeholders;

(c) Proponents of an initiative should bring their interest in convening an initiative to the attention of the Bureau and the secretariat of the Forum as soon as

[6] A revised version of previous guidelines for such initiatives as contained in the report of the Forum on its ninth session (E/2011/42).

possible, in writing, stating the objectives of the initiative, its relevance to the work of the Forum, the proposed venue and date, as well as the estimated participation;

(d) The secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests will participate in the committee established to guide the initiative;

(e) The cost of such initiatives will be borne by the hosts, donors or provided from other sources. Neither the regular United Nations budget nor the United Nations Forum on Forests Trust Fund will cover the cost of such initiatives;

(f) The Bureau member from the region in which the initiative is being held should be invited to attend;

(g) The travel and expenses of one member of the United Nations Forum on Forests secretariat will be covered by the initiative;

(h) Following an initiative, the organizers should submit a report for presentation to the Secretary-General which will be placed on the website of the United Nations Forum on Forests; **the organizers should also present the outcome of the initiative to the upcoming session of the Forum, which will consider it**;

(i) In the interest of registering and acknowledging the contribution of all those involved in the initiative, including in terms of their financial support, the proponents of the initiative may wish to include this information in the report to be submitted to the Secretary-General;

(j) Countries, organizations, regions and major groups are invited to consider these guidelines that will apply to the initiatives announced after the **twelfth** session of the United Nations Forum on Forests.